



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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December 28, 2016
FB16-094

NOAA Fisheries Announces Changes to the Current Seasonal Prohibition on Fishing with Black Sea Bass Pots and Gear Marking

Small Entity Compliance Guide

The final rule for Regulatory Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 16) will publish in the *Federal Register* on **December 29, 2016**. **Regulations for the reduced size of the prohibited area for fishing for black sea bass with pots are effective December 29, 2016. Regulations for the enhanced gear markings are effective January 30, 2017.**

Currently, fishermen may not fish with black sea bass pots from November 1 through April 30, each year, in the entire management area for black sea bass in the South Atlantic. The seasonal prohibition was established in 2013 as a precautionary measure to prevent interactions between black sea bass pot gear and whales during periods of large whale migrations, and during the right whale calving season off the U.S. southeastern coast.

Regulatory Amendment 16 would retain a November 1 through April 30 seasonal prohibition but would reduce the size of the prohibited area. The goal is to reduce the adverse socioeconomic impacts to fishermen resulting from the current seasonal prohibition while continuing to provide the necessary protection to large whales in the South Atlantic region.

The new seasonal prohibitions are below. The prohibition shown in Figure 1 will apply annually during November and April. The prohibition shown in Figure 2 will apply annually from December 1 through March 31. The coordinates for the new area seasonal prohibitions can be found at

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/documents/pdfs/faqs_reg_am_16_fr_122316.pdf.

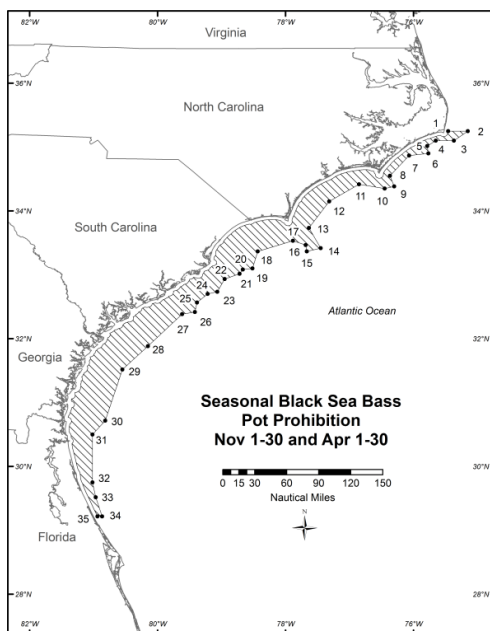


Figure 1.

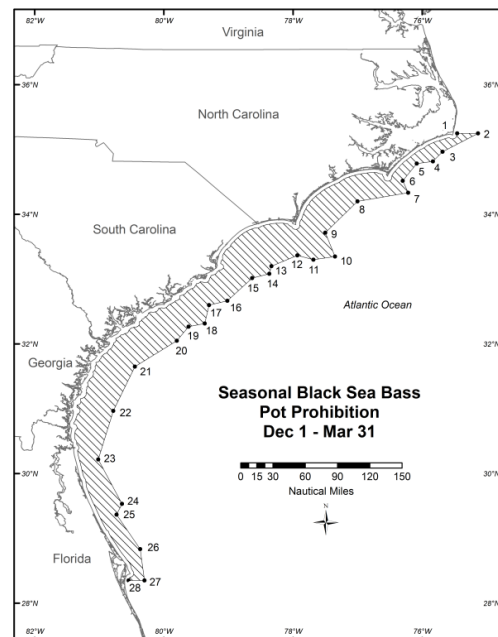


Figure 2.

Regulatory Amendment 16 will also require an additional 12-inch wide purple band in three locations on black sea bass pot lines. The goal is to enhance current gear marking requirements for black sea bass pots to distinguish black sea bass pot lines from other fishing lines. Currently, three 12-inch color marks at the top, midway, and bottom sections of the buoy line are required. **Effective January 30, 2017**, an additional 12-inch wide purple band must be added at the end of each 12-inch colored mark, making each of the three marks a total of 24 inches in length. The new gear marking requirements are required in the following areas and during the following dates: from September 1 through May 31 in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area and Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area, and from November 15 through May 31 in the ALWTRP Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North. The areas and current gear marking requirements may be found at http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=8e3190df9e4af26ee77017ec7b0cb6c3&mc=true&node=se50.11.229_132&rgn=div8.

More Information

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Regulatory Amendment 16, can be found online at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/index.html.

Electronic copies of Regulatory Amendment 16 and its final rule may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries website http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/index.html, the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

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Text alerts you may receive include:

- Immediate fishery openings and closures
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Text SATLrecFISH to 888777

South Atlantic Commercial Fisheries Related Alerts
Text SATLcommFISH to 888777